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SUBJECT: IRANIAN OFFICIAL ADDRESSES BEIJING AUDIENCE ON
NUCLEAR PROGRAM

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: A visiting Iranian Atomic Energy Agency official told an invited audience of some 30 PRC government officials, Chinese academics, and foreign diplomats (including PolOff) April 23 that Iran considered the attainment of nuclear energy a main policy goal, and argued that sanctions implemented over the past 30 years had forced Iran to develop its own nuclear technology. Outlining various projects related to Iran's nuclear program, the official dismissed concerns that Israel might attack Iran's nuclear facilities, and argued that Iran's current stock of 7,000 centrifuges was low by the standards of other nations that possess nuclear power. Iran was open to negotiation with the E3-plus-3, he said, but the grouping had to recognize Iran's right to produce nuclear fuel and technology. Iran had expressed willingness to engage in dialogue with the United States, but only if the United States "modifies its position" on Iran. Allowing IAEA inspectors into Iran's nuclear facilities was beyond its obligations under the NPT, the official said. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Deputy head of the Iranian Atomic Energy Agency Mohammad Saeedi spoke to an audience of some 30 PRC government officials, Chinese academics and foreign diplomats (including PolOff) April 23 at the MFA-affiliated China Institute for International Studies (CIIS) on the topic of "Iran's Policy on the Nuclear Issue." Attendance was by CIIS invitation.

¶3. (SBU) In his prepared remarks, Saeedi stressed the need for nuclear energy to meet Iran's industrial and agricultural demands, and said that international cooperation was a necessary part of Iran's nuclear energy development. The Iranian government considered nuclear energy a main policy goal, according to Saeedi. He argued that sanctions implemented over the past 30 years had forced Iran to develop its own nuclear technology.

¶4. (SBU) Outlining Iran's nuclear facility development plans, Saeedi said the reactor in Bushehr should be active in six to seven months. Iran was also working on a 40-megawatt (MW), heavy-water research reactor, domestically designed and built, that would be operational within two years, Saeedi said. In constructing this heavy-water reactor, Iran had used a Chinese design but with modifications that were necessary because of sanctions. Iran aimed to construct a 5000-MW nuclear power plant with international cooperation and through international tenders, and was currently designing a 360-MW light-water reactor with indigenous companies and experts. Both facilities would be completed within 9-10 years. Saeedi said that Iran was working on a suitability study for a 20,000-MW nuclear power plant, the location for which had yet to be determined, which Iran hoped to complete in the next 30 years. Saeedi also mentioned that Iran was working on a 2,360-MW nuclear power plant, also using only indigenous technology and experts, but provided no other details. (Note: Saeedi's presentation on the nuclear facilities was disorganized, with Saeedi often not clearly

identifying which projects he was discussing. End note.) Saeedi argued that Iran had been forced to develop its own nuclear fuel capacity because of the unreliability of international fuel suppliers.

¶5. (SBU) Asked about concerns that Israel might launch an attack against Iran's nuclear facilities, Saeedi dismissed the concern, arguing that Iran had worked with the international community to define its pursuit of a peaceful nuclear energy program.

¶6. (SBU) Asked why has Iran recently dramatically had increased the speed and scale of centrifuge installation despite international opposition, Saeedi argued that Iran's current stock of 7,000 centrifuges was low by the standards of other nations that possess nuclear power. He also claimed that Iran had the right to produce nuclear fuel under the NPT.

¶7. (SBU) Responding to a question about whether Iran would cooperate with the E3-plus-3, Saeedi said that Iran was open to negotiation with the group, but that the E3-plus-3 had to recognize Iran's right to produce nuclear fuel and technology. On talks with the United States, Saeedi said that President Ahmadinejad had announced Iran's willingness to engage in dialogue, but only if the United States "modifies its position" on Iran.

¶8. (SBU) Asked whether Iran would allow IAEA inspectors into its nuclear facilities, Saeedi argued that Iran was cooperating with the IAEA within the framework of the NPT, but that the IAEA request went beyond Iran's NPT obligations.

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